To the

Merchants and *Clothiers* of *England*.

GENTLEMEN:

THo' I have for many years attended that which I have conceived, to be the greatest Concern of any that related to the Merchants and Clothiers, &c. which is that of preventing Transportation of Wooll; and tho' I have met with many discouragements in it, not only by reason of the greatness of my expence and neglect of time, the many hardships and dangers I went through: But by reason that all those endeavours have been misinterpreted by some, and slighted and neglected by others; as if the Charge I had been at, had not been considerable, or as if the Pains I had taken, had been no way effectual to prevent a great deal of this mischief, that would otherwise have certainly and unavoidably followed: Yet those that have been more throughly acquainted with my endeavours, cannot but be convinced of the contrary.

From which Convictions, some were pleased long since to give me a testimony of the Truth thereof; in the Year 1672 [illegible] Advertisement to the Clothiers and Merchants, and laying before them the consequence of delays, and how far I had proceeded at that time, and was in a fair way to put a stop to that Mischief: Having made such a discovery of grand Transporters; I prosecuted and convicted many of them, but for

 want

want of necessary assistance, I was forced to desist.

Notwithstanding all those discouragements, perceiving at length what I had for some time a suspition of, that some Persons at the then next Session of Parliament, did not only appear to justify the Fact of Transportation of Wooll privately; but did appear publickly and in Print, to assert and avow the convenience that it would be to this Nation; and therefore did desire, that an Act of Parliament might be made for a limited Exportation, giving also some pretended Reasons for the same.

In *March* 1676 a Bill was put into the Hand of an Eminent Member of the then House of Commons, to be brought into that House, with whom I had some Discourse, and did so far dissuade him to delay, till the following Letter prevail'd on the *Factors*, and some *Clothiers* then in Town, to assist me.

March the 22*d*. 1676

Sirs, Having been at *Westminster* this day, and spake with divers Members, I find the Arguments for the Exportation of Wooll, have so far prevailed with the Parliament-men, that a Bill is already put in Sr. T. M. Hand to bring it into the House, which may be done this very day (altho' I had some Discourse with him about it, and did endeavour to dissuade him from it)

The Consequence of which, seeing it must tend to the utter Ruine of the Cloathing Trade, and seeing I have done the utmost that can be expect-

ed on my part to prevent it, which is to draw up Reasons effectually to make out the Inconvenience of it, which I have also put into the Printer's hand.

I thought it my Duty therefore, further to acquaint you, that unless some further speedy Course be taken for a general meeting, to consider how, and in what manner this Mischief should be obviated. I conceived the Interest of the Clothier would suddenly have grown desperate, seeing no private or single Mans appearing in this Case, who ever he be, can signify any thing to oppose it.

I am much convinced, that not only the Clothing Trade, but the very Interest of the Nation in general is at stake, and in hazzard to be utterly lost, if this Point should now be wholly neglected? This I have for some Years foreseen, and have talked of, but it hath not been regarded, but you will find that I speak not slightly, but on good grounds, and what there is just Cause to suspect, will come to pass, if this Matter be not with Industry and Diligence prevented.

After I had prevailed with the Clothiers to give me some encouragement; I did then endeavour to use proper Arguments, and took a fit Season to present them, when the House of Commons was so earnest for the prohibiting *French* Commodities, laying before them, that the Wooll endeavoured to be limited for Transportation was principally intended for *France*, which proved so effectual for

the Ends designed; which Arguments I refer you to for your further satisfaction, ~~viz. Page 3. 4. 5. 6.~~ of my *Reply*.

After this was laid aside, the next Session of Parliament comes a Gentleman that hath been all along my Competitor, and brings in a Bill, and prevailed so far as to get it read and committed, upon which I drew up the following Petition, which was signed by several eminent Merchants and Factors, *viz.*

Whereas *there is a Bill depending, the Preamble whereof seems to be against Transportation of Wooll, the Scope and Consequence of it (as is humbly conceived) will tend rather to encourage it: For whereas it is suggested in the said Bill, that the Act made in the* 14th. *Year of His Majesties Reign, making Transporting of Wooll Felony, is ineffectual for the preventing thereof, and therefore prays the Repealing the Felony of that Act, without confirming the rest of that Act; as if making Transportation to be Felony did encourage Transporting; that Suggestion with all submission is conceived to be a great mistake: For though it must be granted (whatever Laws have been or shall be made in this case) that some Persons for their own Lucre (though it be never so much to the Damage of the great Manufacture of this Kingdom, and notwithstanding all the Care imaginable) will adventure to transport Wooll. Yet for some Years after that Act of the* 14 Car. 2. *was in force, there was a great stop put to the said Transportation, until wooll so increased in* [illegible]*land beyond*

yond its Consumption there and here, that great Quantities were actually transported from thence; but till that Glut the Act of the 12th. Year of His Majesties Reign (by which the Forfeiture was Three Shillings for every pound of Wooll, besides the Wooll forfeited) conjoyned with the Act in the 14th Year of His Majesties Reign, was found effectual to prohibit Transporting Wooll, for the Prosecutor had liberty to prosecute upon which Act he pleased as to the Forfeiture.

Your Petitioners further sheweth: That 'tis well known that the most part of the goods, which are Yearly Imported into this Kingdom, being to the value of several Millions of pounds Sterling, are no otherwise answered, but by the value of the Commodities which are exported hence; the bulk of which consists cheifly in our Woollen-Manufacture.

And it must be granted, that the employment of the Shipping of this Kingdom, which is wholly the maintenance of Sea-men, depends not (as in some other Countries) upon the Fishing, but upon the said Manufacture mainly and principally:

Which therefore is at this time the cheif support of this Kingdom, as that upon which the whole Trade Customs, Shipping, and Strength of it doth mainly depend; over and above the employment that is given to the Poor, and the price that is raised upon all sorts of victuals, and consequently upon Land it self.

From all which it must naturally follow, that Wooll, the material of the said Manufacture, ought to be very

dear to us, which if we are not ſenſible of ur ſelves, the French King will teach us; who well underſtanding, not only wherein the intereſt of this Kingdom doth conſiſt, but how to ſupplant it for the advancement of of his own, hath of late years uſed all Artifices, to acquire the makeing the ſaid Manufacture in his own Dominions with our Wooll; thereby drawing away the ſweet Sapp and Juyce from our Root, for the nouriſhment of a forreign Country, and endeavouring to ſtarve our own, in order to which, he labours to prevent the Importation of our Manufacture, either into his own or other Countries, and hath therefore laid divers heavy Taxes upon it.

Notwithſtanding which, and tho' the ſaid deſign doth obviouſly and manifeſtly appear, yet ſome are ſo ready to contribute to their Countries Ruine, as to argue for, defend, promote, and encourge the Tranſportation of Wooll.

I alſo printed a broad ſheet, intituled *Some Conſiderations humbly offered to the Honourable Houſe of Commons*; and got ſome eminent Merchants to aſſiſt me at the Committee; by which means it was then laid aſide: To which Paper after the Adjournment of the Parliament, I wrote a *Narrative of the Proceedings*, dated the 15 of *July* 1678, and printed it on the back ſide of the *Conſiderations*, to which I alſo refer you.

I ſhall only add, that the Perſon therein mentioned is he, that about fiveteen Years ago, was endeavouring to put a Tax of 2*d. per* Tod, upon all Wooll of the growth

growth of *England* and *Ireland*, to be paid by the buyer, and that upon Oath, which I then prevented; and this was for some private Person, and the same Person is still endeavouring to oppose me by his Agents.

Having therefore for many Years made it my Care to secure the Prohibition of the Exportation of Wooll, and been ready in all places to obviate the Designes of those, who went about to enervate and alter the Laws made therein: I have spent much Time and Mony in my Attendances both on the King and Council at every Session of Parliament: where I have been constantly vigilent.

I have also humbly represented to His Excellency the Lord Livetennant of *Ireland* (now going thither) the mischief of Transportation of *Irish* Wooll which upon my Petition to His Majesty is refer'd to His Excellencies Care.

Besides my Journies and late Services in *Kent*, in overseeing the Vessels at Sea, hath been no small Charge to me, wherein also my Danger hath been as Great as my Success, in regard the Exporters go armed, and have ventured to kill those that oppose them.

And since I have taken the three Sloops, the *French* King hath put out three Men of War, who are now cruising upon our Coast, to protect the *French* Sloops in stealing away our Wooll.

And this present Month, *viz.* 3*d.* of *November* 1685

1685 about midnight, a parcel of Wooll ready to be ship't off, being seized on the Sea side near *Hythe-shade* in the County of *Kent*, the *French* Men that belonged to the Sloop that waited to transport it, being well armed, fell upon us that seized it, and rescuing the Wooll carried it away to Sea.

Now seeing our Adversaries are so bold and daring, that what they cannot accomplish by secret Fraud, they will carry on by open Force; besides the Diligence and Industry to prevent them, there are apparent hazards of Life.

Therefore as well in Consideration of my past Services, the charge of Servants and Assistance, as the present burthen lies upon me in looking after the said Vessels, as also my constant and unalterable Resolutions, by my future continued Attendances in all Places. Needful and strict Vigilance to secure this Point: Therefore I cannot but doubt, that I may have reason to expect Encouragement therein, by some light and easy Contribution of all Persons concerned, least otherwise I ruine my private Condition, while I am endeavouring to serve the Publick.

Gentlemen

Your

Humble Servant

W. Carter.